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the precise subject of our example, that Ruskin has so eloquently described.

It will be seen that we have insisted upon the absolute necessity that the observer of a picture, when forming his opinions thereupon, should first ask himself if the subject is worthy of the exercise of the function of Art: if it teaches or illustrates anything interesting to man as man, and is not a mere toy,—for if it be so, not only will the work of the artist tend to nothing, or perhaps worse, for its effect on the observer, but it is a flagrant throwing away of man's opportunity in the world, putting aside his duty, and wasting the part of his life in which he stands as upon the apex of a pyramid which preceding generations have built up in order that he too might do something which should raise a higher ground upon which those who come after him may work.

The range of subjects interesting to man as man is so enormous, that collectively he might almost say in the words of Keats' Apollo—

"Knowledge enormous makes a god of me,
Names, deeds, grey legends, dire events, rebellion,
Majesties, sovereign voices, agonies,
Creations and destroyings, all at once
Pour into the wide hollows of my brain
And deify me, as if of some blithe wine
Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,
And so become immortal."

In our own individual opinion it seems that in the choice of subject a preference should be given to those which are more immediately connected with our own times, not only as being of more direct interest to us, but as handing down to the future generations, for his study, the actions and aspect of men as they are and as they appear to us.

The choice and proper elucidation of a subject then is the "Idea of a picture," for by this more may be discriminated of an artist's talent, than by mere technical execution, however beautiful or however laborious.

F. G. S.

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"If you enjoy the pursuit of analogies and types, and have any ingenuity of judgment in discerning them, you may always accurately ascertain what are the noble characters in a piece of painting by merely considering what are the noble characters of man in his association with his fellows. What grace of manner and refinement of habit are in society, grace of line and refinement of form are in the association of visible objects. What advantage or harm there may be in sharpness, ruggedness, or quaintness in the dealings or conversations of men; precisely that relative degree of advantage or harm there is in them as elements of pictorial composition. What power is in liberty or relaxation to strengthen or relieve human souls, that power, precisely in the same relative degree, play and laxity of line have to strengthen or refresh the expression of a picture. And what goodness or greatness we can conceive to arise in companies of men, from chastity of thought, regularity of life, simplicity of custom, and balance of authority, precisely that kind of goodness and greatness may be given to a picture by the purity of its color, the severity of its forms, and the symmetry of its masses.—Ruskin.

WOMAN NATIONALLY CONSIDERED.

THE ITALIAN WOMAN.

MAY not the progress of diplomatic attainments in the woman world be calculated to produce universal female migration? Romantic and warm-hearted women should aim to transfer themselves to countries that are organically deficient in the attributes of beauty. An accomplished and graceful Italian woman would find more admirers here or in Great Britain than in her native land. Intellectual and sharply selfish ladies might change their abode with great advantage to all parties concerned, and find brilliant reception among the sunny beaux of southern regions. A vehement and passionate cavalier of Messina or Bologna would feel, in all probability, attracted by a metaphysical *Signora* of Portland or Cambridge. Sympathies sing to the tune of opposites. This accounts for many strange and wayward anomalies in the realm of affection. Picturesque contrasts afford universal delight. A sulky, dark complexioned, calculating man, is generally enamored with a bright, blue-eyed affectionate maiden. Steaming, fretting, business-ground, money-getting money-seeking America is singularly captivated by the graces, the charms, the romance, and the moral beauty of womanhood. In lumbered streets thronged by ugly crowds, the sight of a lovely woman acts like a revelation of fairy land. In lands where the very stones in the streets cry out against poesy and beauty, woman, as the instinctive and spontaneous exponent of the gentle harmonies of life, naturally exerts a magic influence. But not so in lands where beauty is the rule and ugliness the exception; not so in the land of Romeo and Juliet; not so in the land of Dante and Beatrice; not so in the land of Tasso and Leonora; not so in the land of Michael Angelo and Raphael; not so in the land of *Ætna* and Vesuvius; not so among the smiling valleys of Lombardy and along the classic shores of the Arno; not so in the lands of the date and the olive; not so in Italy. There all is beauty. There the culture of Hellas struck root into a congenial soil. Thither travelled Shakespeare to bring Desdemona, Portia, Rosalind, and Beatrice to English shores, in order to infuse some seeds of beauty into recalcitrant soils. Thither travelled Byron to escape from the desolating barrenness of his native land. Here Goethe gathered his loveliest inspirations. Here, to this Mecca of beauty, migrate poetic pilgrims from all parts of the world. Here men do not pass their time in defining, with metaphysical acuteness, the law of beauty;—beauty is, there, a peeress in her own right. She is in the sky, in the fields, in the streets, in the churches, in the market-place. She is here and there and everywhere. Yonder peasant boy, who carries a basket of fruit to the fair of Gensano, carries a much more precious fruit in his laughing eye, in his eloquent mouth, in his picturesque costume.

Skies, mountains, valleys, seas, rivers, trees, flowers, all evidently revelling in a symposium of love, have gracefully settled down upon that narrow strip of land in the Mediter-

raean; in a charming recess, half-way between Athens and Paris, blending the classic enthusiasm of the one with the fascinating vivacity of the other, charmingly inclining towards the Moorish lands of Spain, and coqueting across the Adriatic, with the Asiatic features of Smyrna and Byzantium. This fair land, so providentially calculated by its position and its soil to absorb the best influences of the world, and to act out the thought upon which other nations are only permitted to ponder, may strike the superficial annalist as having fallen from its high estate. He will point to the hideous clank of Austrian bayonets, and say they jar upon the hallowed harmonies of a classic soil. He will point to the enthusiasm of the past, and to the apathy of the present, and say, look at this picture and look at that, and then pronounce condemnation upon the capabilities of this noble land. But the annalist deals only with years. The historian, who takes a wide survey of ages, will pause in his judgment. Vesuvius emits lava only at certain periods; so is it with the men of Italy. Those impetuous, imaginative people are not wasting their powers upon mental hair-splitting; but when a crisis comes they rush forward like lions to the great amphitheatre of action. Italy will yet arise from her lethargic slumber, and vindicate her ancient glory.

But while the Italian bides his time to assert again his towering position among the nations of the earth, the world is slow to conceive that a nation so full of beauty can be equally conspicuous for power. Yet it is only this individual consciousness of power which clothes the Italian countenance with so much beauty. How does woman fare in such surroundings? The wanderer's attention in the streets of Rome, Venice, Naples, and Florence is singularly divided; on one side a beauteous statue, unmatched for its harmonious proportions, claims his admiration; again, his eyes are fascinated by some gorgeous pageant of the church of Rome; next he meets a remarkable looking man, with dark, piercing eyes, and with a world of imagination upon his classic brow; or he is lulled into reverie by the lazy beauty of the climate. Woman is no longer the only exponent of beauty; she has found a most dangerous rival in the beauties of nature and of art, and in the eloquent bearing of the men. We find then that the Italian woman, from the fact of being surrounded with so many beautiful rivals, has less of pride and more of simplicity, less of affectation and more of naturalness, less of conceit, and more of sincerity than most other women of the continent. She is semi-Grecian, semi-Parisian. But if she does not fully reveal the soaring intellectuality of the one, she does not manifest the same *éclat* and thoughtlessness as the other; her nature is more given to love than to thoughts, her mind being vigorous without being speculative. One-sided intellectual women do not exist in Italy. The Italian woman, by constantly moving in an atmosphere of beauty, so divinely congenial to the intrinsic refinement and elegance of woman's mind, gathers strength of character from this harmonious association. Yet this

strength is tempered by indescribable feelings of humility and modesty; she recognizes, as it were, that with all the greatness of her mission, woman is not the all in all of earth. Great men, great souvenirs loom up from the past; imperishable vestiges of their presence live in a thousand monuments around her. This has a remarkable effect in curbing woman's pride, and in blending power with modesty. The quickness of her national perception, however, and the mobility of her imagination, gives the Italian at times a mercurial, combustible look. Imagination, which is apt to degenerate into speculativeness in England, into sentimentality in Germany, and into fancy in France, is the Italian woman's heir-loom. Women of other nations may excel in writing poetry, but the Italian woman is a poet, *par excellence*, by the composition of her nature; we find her ever quick to eliminate the ideal from the gross reality, the inner thought from the spoken word, and the impetuosity of her reasoning only impresses so strangely, because her imagination is constantly at work so intensely. Like all creatures gifted with this poetical insight, she is as intuitive as she is spontaneous. The consequence is, that the common-sense view of life which the English woman adopts by calculation, is in the Italian woman the result of an instinctive appreciation of the beauty of common sense. The English woman is sensible, but looks frequently repulsive; the Italian is not less sensible, but she is at the same time more lovable.

There is about most Italian women an ineffable prestige of gentleness, which stands in almost picturesque contrast to the vigor and fullness of her presence. Frequently at Ravenna or Ferrara, on meeting an Italian lady of imposing stature, of majestic amplitude of form, and with raven hair and dark luminous eyes, we felt abashed and intimidated, and thought upon beholding her large Vesuvian mouth, she would speak only in thunder, or in words that would burn like lava. But great was our surprise to find the same lady who had excited the awe of a tragedy queen as gentle as a dove, and the same woman who seemed intended by nature to hurl anathemas against mankind, a good, affectionate creature, kindly disposed towards all men. This sense of grandeur awakened by her appearance, and the child-like simplicity in her moral and intellectual nature, struck us as a most delightful specialty of Italian womanhood.

As we ramble through other Italian cities we become aware of the conflicting characteristics among conflicting Italian nationalities. We find the Tuscan more dramatic, the Lombard woman more thoughtful, the Sicilian more vehement, the Roman woman more pompous than the rest. The Genoese and Venetian women struck us as the most fascinating types; the one seemed to us to combine great brightness and sprightliness, with a most affectionate and tender disposition. About the Genoese there is a daring spirit, as if they had inherited something of the energy of Columbia's godfather. This bold *élan* of character is common to most women who live among world-wide associa-

tions;—such as belong to the commerce and the shipping of Genoa, and to the romantic recklessness of the population. The Venetian seems less positive than other Italian women. At times she reminded us of the Spanish-Flemish woman of Amsterdam and Antwerp, as if the constant association with the mysteries of the sea had infused a certain dreaminess into the general vigor of her picturesque nature. But this, as far as our limited experience went, was chiefly perceptible in women of the higher classes who lead a very *dolce far niente* life. The Venetian female democracy struck us, on the other hand, as possessing some of those piquant and provoking features of the girls of Genoa. How bewitching the Venetian patois when it comes forth from the quicksilver lips of Venetian girls! A Yankee literary speculator would reap a fortune by writing down the table-talk of one of these Venetian or Genoese girls. They say more poetical, beautiful, and wise things in half an hour, than Coleridge and Emerson have elaborated through the whole course of their lives. Nowhere is the backwardness of poets and artists in taking their inspiration from real life so apparent, as on listening to the intuitive wisdom, the spontaneous philosophy, the unwritten poetry of some of these bright Italian girls.

Many of the loveliest homes in Italy are those lit up by the lovely nature of Italian womanhood. Life which, in many instances, is trifled away in France, fretted away in Anglo-Saxon lands, and dreamt away in Germany, is here overflowing with sparkling vivacity, and instinct with a delightful regard for the happiness of all. To find fault, to chide, to lay the hand upon the vulnerable parts of the natures of friends and relatives, and to draw out with cowardly malice some bitter arrow of unfriendly criticism;—this is one of the odious drawbacks of many women in northern lands. But not so in Italy;—there the tendency of woman is rather to admire than to disparage, rather to make others happy than to augment the vicissitudes of life by a heartless and callous bearing. The mephistophelean enjoyment which northern ladies derive from parading the sharpness of their mental vision by indulging in remarks that lacerate the feelings of others, is little known in regions where, as in Italy, the gentle laws of beauty are the rule, and the odious impulses of selfishness the exception. Generally speaking, we find the women of Italy more happy than those of northern countries, because the whole tenor of their sentiments and thoughts is less exclusively absorbed by egotistical aspirations. It is natural there to find the relation of daughters to their parents pervaded by this delicious fragrance of tenderness of feeling. Frequently we found Italian young ladies showering upon their old fathers those treasures of brightness and wit, which, in less gifted countries, are seldom lavished in the same direction. Many a northern lady, with the like rare gifts of fancy and beauty, might perchance pour them out on some novel or magazine, but she would be as parsimonious in the social use of them, as a miser with his mabney. But in Italy, the generous gifts of

Nature are used, as possibly they were intended to be, to enhance the happiness of those dearest to the soul, and hence the graceful abandon of the Italian maidens in their filial relations. The conjugal relation in Italy is beautified by the same influences. The manly and graceful nature of the Italian man removes from the heart of wives many feelings of discontent which haunt woman's mind in less sunny countries. The wife finds in the husband something more than a mere conjugal partner, and she need not resort to fashionable churches and parties to fill up the gaps of monotony and the desolations of a joyless existence. Hence from this constant flow of happiness of the spirit, such as exists whenever a wife's heart and mind are attracted towards the accomplishments and graces of her husband, we find the Italian wife spreading around her a sense of joy and felicity, a fragrance of copious heart-life, which imparts inexpressible charms to her home, which has a blessed influence upon children born under such auspicious circumstances, and which by a singular affinity of extremes, gives to the Italian wife, by the force of her imagination and her affection, the same self-poised appearance, which northern women frequently derive from opposite causes. It is in this condition of home-life that we must look for an explanation of the anomaly of seeing a chivalric and high-spirited people bearing with so much apparent meekness the yoke of a brutal tyranny. The aspirations of the citizen are lulled into sleep by the endearments of the family, and in the grace which woman sheds over the spheres of home, the groans of the nation become less audible. But brighter days are dawning for Italy, when happiness in the family will go hand in hand with freedom in the state. At present Italian intellect is gagged by priesthood and Austrian bayonets. Nothing can be sadder than a sight of the sufferings inflicted upon the Italian woman by this state of things. We were at Verona in 1850, and while walking in the streets we met a woman weeping bitterly. On inquiring into the cause of her grief, she said that she had been ejected from her own house by Austrian officers who boarded there, because she had objected to their smoking. And the worst of it was, that when the story was related to the Austrian commandant of Verona, while he was revelling in wine and smoke at the principal *table d'hôte* of the place, the brutal soldier chuckled with laughter, and said: "Serves her right." This and similar brutality has awaked in many an Italian woman's mind an inextinguishable hatred against their oppressors; nothing can be more sublime than to see a woman of Milan or Venice in one of these outbursts of passion, when, with sparkling eyes and thrilling voice, she glows with hatred, and vows vengeance on the enemies of her country.

The most lamentable feature of the condition of Italy is, that oppression weighs like a nightmare upon the intellectual advancement of womanhood. As in America, we find in Italy, woman's mind growing under periods of national excitement, when man's thoughts are filled by nobler aspi-

rations than those of pleasure and lucre, and when the approaching hosts of freedom widen the spheres of womanly vision. Thus many New England women were roused to moral enthusiasm at the time of the Revolutionary war, and transmitting this enthusiasm to their offspring, there was for a short time a moral halo radiant from the land. It was so in Italy even during the late abortive revolution. More even than men, the women there sympathized with the struggles of the patriot, and in many an Italian woman's heart *Mazzini* is worshipped as a saint and a martyr. In the absence of liberty, however, thought is smothered, and many Italian women are doomed to a life of mental vegetation, simply because despotic latitudes dam up the outlets of intellectual aspiration. Hence the comparative mental indolence of many Italian women is much more attributable to this fatal influence than to the impetuous and passionate elements of their character, to which it is frequently erroneously ascribed.

The most delightful Italian woman type is the *blondine*. The blue eyes in Italy gather peculiar beauty from the loveliness of the atmosphere, and the golden curls of very fair hair seem to reflect the rays of the sun. In Italy, where the minds and the hearts of women are so beautifully combined, there is a peculiar magnetism in those personal traits. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Italian ladies who have passed the first bloom of life. Instead of presenting a shrivelled and withered appearance, they seem to grow in beauty as they grow in years, and although age, of course, marks its progress, yet its ravages are frequently well-nigh imperceptible. In no country in the world are so many middle-aged beautiful women as in Italy, and this also we attribute to the fullness of their imagination and spiritual nature, which permits them to bear the sacred pangs of motherhood without impairing the vigor and buoyancy of their physique or their intellect. The innate elegance and refinement of Italian character, clothes the Italian woman with great social attraction. In London, and Paris, and Vienna, high society Italian ladies are, perhaps, more beloved than any other class of women. They present a combination of nobility of appearance, and naturalness and simplicity of manner, which is vouchsafed to few women of other lands. So the traveller in Italy is struck everywhere with queenly looking women. They abound in the fashionable circles of Florence and Rome, although they are seen to much greater advantage in their homes, and in the interior of the country, where the conventionalities of social etiquette do not exist to hamper the freedom of their movements and manifestations. Finally, in Italian womanhood, as a whole, we find great and noble traits of moral and mental elevation, which augur well for the future destinies of that beautiful and hallowed country.



MANY who have been once learned have given up their lease to avoid the trouble of repairs.—*T. Campbell*.

GOETHE AND HIS RELATION TO ART.

II.

THE artist is a child and follower of Nature. He is true to her moods and methods. He works in her spirit, to like results. He shows to the narrow minds of the multitude, more clearly than she can do, her plan, her beneficence, her harmony. He is an interpreter between her greatness and our littleness, and his merit is faithful interpretation. We have seen Goethe striving to honor the ideal force which pervades human activity: that constant tendency to ascension, which is the gravitation of the soul. If he had neglected this element, if he had not shared the flight of fire towards the sun, his books would fall from our fingers. Studies of what is called every-day life are intolerable. To live it is bad enough. To be obliged to live it over again in thought, to spend our hour of leisure among the crowd of eaters and traders, is a vastation worthy to have been added by Swedenborg to the torments of his abyss. The little circle of society to which we are introduced by an author must be animated by some "extraordinary generous feeling," or his picture is false to Nature and a mockery of our desires. Again, Goethe reproduces the method of the Maker in his tendency to clothe every thought with living form and to exhibit every law, not as law, but as life. He is a sphynx at the feet of the sphynx, and in characters, actions, and events he makes more manifest the vital forces, which hasten from the beginning to manifest themselves in actions, characters, and events. Our poet is also contented and delighted with such forms as the everlasting World Spirit has chosen to wear in this new day. He can clothe his best perceptions, his best wishes, in a garment woven of such activity as he sees. Living among us, he would feel that a railroad, which is a fact, is more poetic than a hippocriff, which is a fancy, because the possible alone represents the ideal. We find in his practice, therefore, the best modern illustration of three leading principles of Art.

Let us go to consider the healthy habit of his later years, the reproduction in his serene and cheerful mind, of that tranquillity and sufficiency which shines through nature to rebuke our care and fret. This repose in activity, this joyous earnestness, is the true poetic mood. It is the attitude of one who knows the omnipotence of those laws which sustain the sphere, who sees the prevalence of right over wrong, of order over confusion: who sees the old remains of chaos taking form, all nebulae resolving into worlds and systems before the intelligence of man, an irresistible growing light. He enjoys the creation which he sees proceeding, enjoys the part he is called to take in it, and does not repine because the world is not perfected to his thought. He sees the power there is in thought, and would rather do what is to be done than stand by to see it accomplished. He is glad to have been born early into Time, to share the work of the morning. In our rude and sensual civilization there is work enough to be done. But